

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Sunlight Ranch Stock Water Pipeline Land Use License
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2018
Proponent:	Craig Hossfeld for Sunlight Ranch Company – Lessee
Location:	Section 36, Township 1N, Range 36 East
County:	Big Horn

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Craig Hossfeld, on behalf of the Sunlight Ranch Company, is proposing the installation of two sections of underground stock water pipeline into and across Section 36, T1N R36E. The first section will run diagonally from the southeast to the northwest following a two-track road to minimize new disturbance. This portion of the proposed water pipeline will meet an existing well on Section 36. The second section of underground pipeline will also follow an older two-track and will come from the northeast corner of Section 36 heading southwest and will dead end within the NE4 at a proposed stock tank. See the attached map for a more detailed description of the proposed stock water pipeline installation. The total length of underground pipeline to be installed is approximately 8400 feet.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Southern Land Office, the Billings DNRC Water Resources office, the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team and Craig Hossfeld, on behalf of Sunlight Ranch Company– Lessee of State Lease #9661, are involved in this project.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

The Sunlight Ranch is working with the Billings DNRC Water Resources office to ensure they have the proper names and descriptions on all of the water rights associated with their stock water pipeline system they will be installing this fall.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – The DNRC does not grant permission to the Sunlight Ranch Company to install two sections of underground stock water pipeline on Section 36, T1N R36E.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – The DNRC does grant permission to the Sunlight Ranch Company to install two sections of underground stock water pipeline on Section 36, T1N R36E.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

No fragile or unstable soils were found to be present in the area of the proposed pipeline route. The soils consist of loams to silty clay loams.

Soils within the proposed pipeline route are rated as well suited for reclamation by the USDA Web Soil Survey. Once installation is complete, the pipeline route will be reclaimed and seeded with a native grass seed mix to reduce erosion. Various pipelines in the area show that with post installation reclamation, these soils are capable of handling such an action

No significant adverse impacts to the soils are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

The proposed pipeline would not affect groundwater, ambient water quality standards, and drinking water contaminants or degrade water quality. The placement of the pipeline would distribute livestock water to the northeast corner of Section 36 and the adjacent deeded ground to the north and south.

No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity, or distribution are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The concentrated use of vehicles to place the pipeline may generate some airborne dust. These activities will minimally affect air quality for a very limited amount of time.

No significant adverse impacts to air quality are anticipated

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Vegetation in the area of the proposed improvements consists of the following native and introduced species: Western Wheatgrass, Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Green Needlegrass, Needle & Thread, Blue Grama, Prairie Junegrass, Threadleaf Sedge, Various Forbs, and Cheatgrass.

The pipeline route is planned to avoid unstable areas. Once installation is complete, the pipeline route will be reclaimed and seeded with a native grass seed mix. The lessee accepts responsibility for ensuring no noxious weeds take hold in the disturbed pipeline route.

No significant adverse impacts to vegetation cover are anticipated.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Local wildlife may be displaced during construction for a very short period of time. Once construction has finished, the area will be available for use by local wildlife once again. The proposed improvements, once installed, are not anticipated to significantly impact their habitat or movement throughout the tract.

No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A search of the Natural Heritage Program did not identify any Species of Concern that may occur in the proposed project area.

A field visit was conducted on August 8th, 2018.

Section 22 was identified to be within General Habitat for the Greater Sage Grouse. The proponent consulted the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) regarding the proposed project. Attached is a copy of the recommendations letter that was received from MSGOT. MSGOT recommended that all segments of the project within General Habitat implement weed management. MSGOT recommended that reclamation of disturbed areas must include control of noxious weeds and invasive plant species, including cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicas*).

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

An on-site visit was conducted on August 8th, 2018. No cultural resources were noted during the inspection of the proposed pipeline routes.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed pipeline will be placed underground and after reclamation, should not be highly visible. Stock water pipelines are commonplace in the area and the addition of this proposed pipeline should not impact the aesthetics of the local area significantly.

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The proposed stock water pipelines are not anticipated to require a significantly higher amount of water than is currently used within Section 36. No demands on limited resources are required for this project.

No adverse impacts are anticipated.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed on this EA.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i> |
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14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

There are some human safety risks associated with operating equipment. The proponent and their employees accept these risks as acceptable occupational hazards.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The project will not alter any current agricultural use patterns. Livestock grazing will continue as before. Better livestock water distribution will likely improve the grazing distribution throughout Section 36 and the adjacent deeded lands.

No adverse impacts to agriculture activities are anticipated.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The proposed activity will not create, move or eliminate any jobs. No new jobs will be created.

No adverse impacts to the employment market are anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There will be no increases in traffic, no changes in traffic patterns, and no need for additional fire protection, or police services.

No adverse impacts to government services are anticipated.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This tract does not have public access, therefore no adverse impacts to access and quality of recreational activities are anticipated.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No adverse impacts to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed project will have no effect on any unique quality of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The proposed stock water pipeline system would be authorized by the DNRC under a Land Use License. This Land Use License would return \$200 to the Common Schools Trust for a 10-year license. If renewed in 10 years, it would return another \$200 at that time. The lessee values the proposed stock water pipeline as a \$14,850.00 improvement to State Grazing Lease #9661.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name:	Jocee Hedrick
	Title:	Land Use Specialist
Signature:		Date:

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Alternative B and recommend that DNRC does grant permission to the Sunlight Ranch Company to install two sections of underground stock water pipeline on Section 36, T1N R36E.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no significant adverse environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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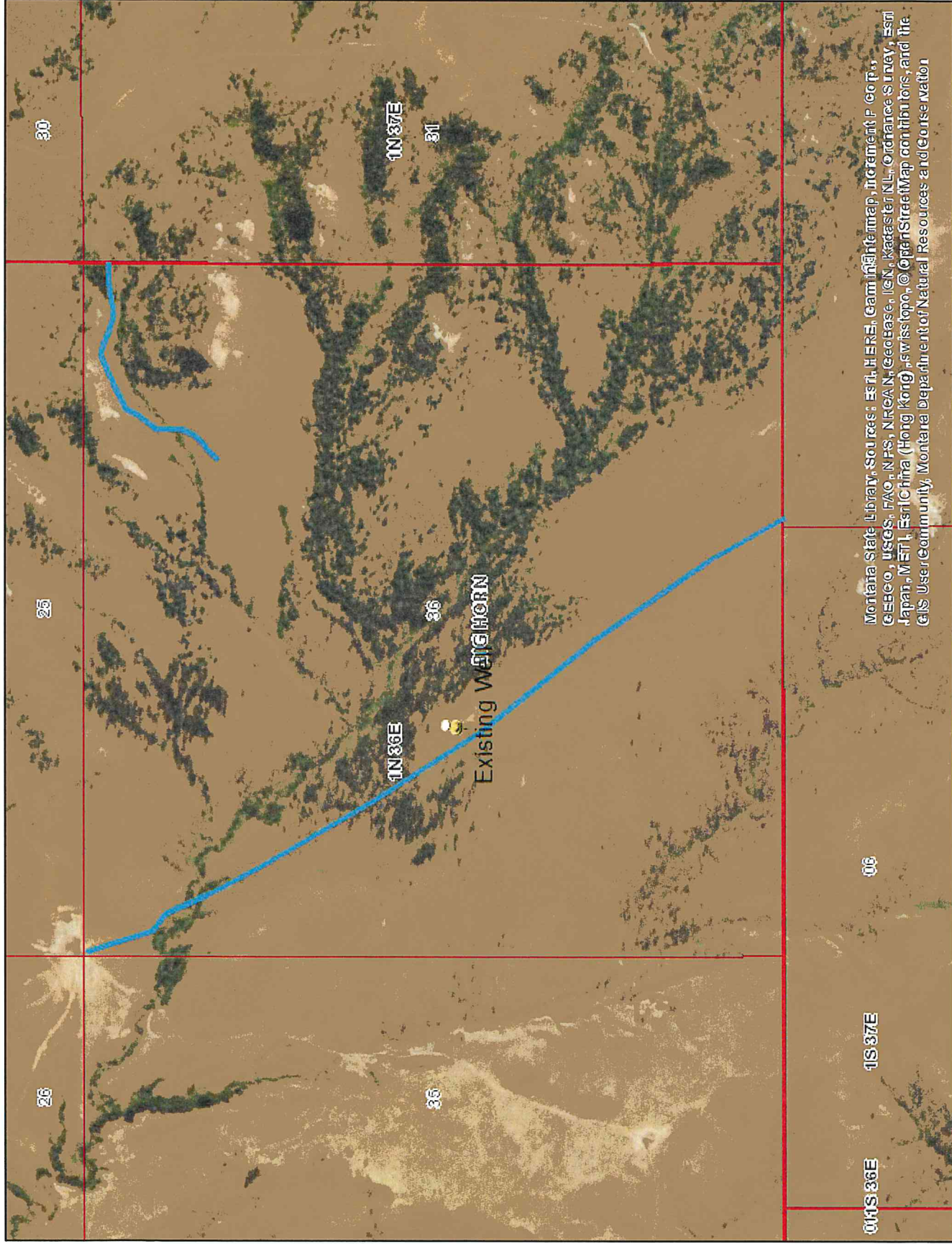
More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name:	Jeffrey Hermanns
	Title:	Southern Land Office Area Forester
Signature:	Date: 8/20/18	

Sunlight Ranch Company Proposed Stock Water Pipelines



The Montana Department of
Natural Resources
& Conservation

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PLSS Township
 PLSS First Division
 Section

Protraction Block
 Office Locations
 CARD

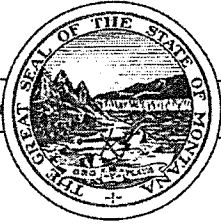
DNRC Headquarters
 Board of Oil and Gas
 CARDD

Trust Lands/Forestry
 Water Resources
 Mountain Peaks
 MT_Cities

0 0.075 0.15 0.3 0.45 0.6 Miles

Montana State Library, Sources: ESRI, HERE, Garmin, Mapbox, DeLorme, GeoEye, IGN, Kataster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri, GeoEye, USDA, NPS, NRCAN, Geobase, IGN, Kataster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri, Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Swisstopo, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User community, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

MONTANA SAGE GROUSE HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAM



STEVE BULLOCK, GOVERNOR

1539 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

PHONE: (406) 444-0554
FAX: (406) 444-6721

PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

Project No. 3116
Governor's Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015
Livestock Water System Upgrade

Craig Hossfeld
P.O. Box 68
Wyola, MT 59089

August 9, 2018

Dear Mr. Hossfeld,

The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program received a request for consultation and review of your project or proposed activity on July 27, 2018. Based on the information provided, all or a portion of this project is located within General Habitat for sage grouse. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) classifies this area as a General Habitat Management Area (GHMA).

Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 set forth Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Montana's goal is to maintain viable sage grouse populations and conserve habitat so that Montana maintains flexibility to manage our own lands, our wildlife, and our economy and a listing under the federal Endangered Species Act is not warranted in the future. The Program has completed its review, including:

Project Description:

Project Type: Agriculture - Water

Project Disturbance: 5.4 Miles Buried Pipeline, 0.56 Miles Above Ground Pipeline and 7 Water Tanks

Construction Dates: August, 2018 to November, 2018, Temporary (< 1 Year)

Disturbance Duration: August, 2018 Permanent (> 25 Years)

Project Location:

Legal: Township 1 North, Range 36 East, Sections 25 and 36
Township 1 North, Range 37 East, Section 31
Township 1 South, Range 37 East, Sections 5 and 6

County: Big Horn

Ownership: Montana State Trust Lands, Private



Hosted by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Director's Office: (406) 444-2074



Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 Consistency:

The project proposes to install a water pipeline on private and State Trust Land in designated General Habitat for sage grouse.

The proponent will be upgrading a livestock water system, adding an underground tank battery for water storage, approximately 6 miles of buried water pipelines, 0.56 miles of above ground water pipeline and seven livestock water tanks. The lines will be installed with a ditch witch trencher resulting in approximately a two-foot-wide surface disturbance that will be reclaimed within one growing season. The pumps will be operated on a solar/wind/backup generator system. Access roads to the project site are pre-existing.

Based on the information you provided, your project is not within two miles of an active sage grouse lek. The nearest lek is approximately ten miles from the project site.

Recommendations:

The following stipulations are taken from Montana Executive Order 12-2015. These stipulations are designed to maintain existing levels of suitable sage grouse habitat by managing uses and activities in sage grouse habitat to ensure the maintenance of sage grouse abundance and distribution in Montana. Development should be designed and managed to maintain populations and sage grouse habitats.

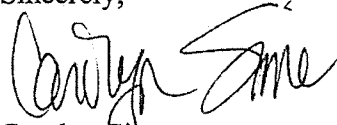
- Weed management is required within General Habitat for sage grouse. Reclamation of disturbed areas must include control of noxious weeds and invasive plant species, including cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicas*).

Your activities are consistent with the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Your proposed project or activity may need to obtain additional permits or authorization from other Montana state agencies or possibly federal agencies. They are very likely to request a copy of this consultation letter, so please retain it for your records.

Please be aware that if the location or boundaries of your proposed project or activity change in the future, or if new activities are proposed within one of the designated sage grouse habitat areas, please visit <https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/projects/> and submit the new information.

Thanks for your interest in sage grouse and your commitment to taking the steps necessary to ensure Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy is successful.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Sime

Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Manager



cc: Shawn Thomas
DNRC-Trust Land Management Administrator
P.O. Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1601

